

An Essay

on

"Medical Opinions
and Qualifications."

Respectfully submitted
to the Faculty of the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of Pennsylvania,

on the

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by

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"Fate is above us all;
We struggle, but what matters our endeavor?
Our doom is gone beyond our own recall;
May we deny or mitigate it? — Never!"
Moral.

A "Thesis" must be
written. "The die is cast." No alternative
remains. The ill-fated day draws nigh!
"Alas! What day is there in human state,
Or who can shun inevitable fate?"
"Necessity,
To which the gods must yield; and I obey."

To seek for truths of
extensive application and to deduce
from collected and collated facts
fixed and immutable laws has ever been

a leading peculiarity of the human intellect. From the earliest days of antiquity, man has labored long and zealously to ascertain and develop in a tangible form those principles, which should guide his course and in their practical exemplification should elevate him to a honorable eminence in his peculiar sphere of action.

The Hermit, secluded in his lonely, shade-embowered retreat and the learned Divine, stocked with theologic lore would fain discover the moral laws, which should govern the erratic passions and depraved tendencies of human hearts. The Statesman, well-trained in the principles of political science, would find out the general form of govern-

ment, which, in its practical workings, should place his own "Native Land" in the foremost rank among contending rivals.

The Philosopher searches with uncommitted zeal for those laws, which influence the material world in its ever-changing scenes, while the Chemist with blazing lamp and red-hot crucible develops the principles which govern inorganic bodies in their various unions and mysterious combinations. Religion, human government, the various departments of Science and Art, all attest the innate tendency of human reasoning to pass from the observation of isolated facts to the establishment of "General Principles." This is the object of all study, the ultimatum of all investigation. Having thus briefly presented a few instances

of this governing principle in the direction
of human effort, we proceed to consider
more especially the relation, which it
sustains to the "healing art" and the
practical duties of the physician, arising there-
from. Can scarcely any other department
is there an equal necessity for the existence
of general principles, by which action may
be guided and practical results may be occa-
sioned, beneficial in their character
and salutary in their legitimate conse-
quences. The reason of this is too obvious
to require further elucidation.

And yet, with this acknowledged necessity,
the number of fixed laws, gathered from
the accumulated experience of the past,
is meagre in the extreme. This lack
is sensibly perceived not only by the youthful

aspirant, but also by the gray-haired veteran
who has long stood by the bed-side of suf-
fering humanity and oft-times witnessed
the total insufficiency of all his skill.

This deficiency in general laws readily
accounts for the great diversities, which
characterize the opinions of the most
intelligent observers and brightest re-
nowned of the medical profession.

To illustrate the changes in medical
opinions, which are daily occurring, observe
the varied treatment at different pe-
riods in the removal of that most cruel
disease, of which the poet sings in
sadly mournful lays,

Next Gout appears with limping pace,
which often shifts from place to place;
From head to foot, how swift he flies,

And every joint and sinew flies;
Still working, when he seems suppress'd
A most tenacious, stubborn guest."

One physician stands with open lance
and bids defiance to the invading foe;
another comes, laden with pill and
bolus dreading to drive the fierce disease
away; a third presents himself with
sickening doses of nauseous drugs, as if
eager to make the enemy retire in utter
disgust at such foul proceedings,
while yet another, with smiling looks
and pleasant words, extends the precious
sugar-globule and by its magic power most
wonderous things performs. One believes the
blood the source, whence all diseases
originate and from which flow the
streams of desolation and death.

Another says, "not-so." The blood is not in fault,
the solids are the seat of many varied ailments,
while a third, as if to reconcile opposing
extremes, combines the two into a harmonious
system of belief. One considers remedial
agents of the utmost importance in
the successful treatment of disease; his
neighbor with equal pertinacity, renoun-
ces all medication as utterly worthless
and injurious. How does not this diversity
this opposition even in medical opinions
argue strongly against the existence of
general principles, which should be
the standard of reference in these
long-mooted and thoroughly-discussed
topics? This lack being acknowledged,
what are the duties, required from
the intelligent physician of the

present age? The course, he must pursue,
is evident. From the collection and proper
arrangement of individual cases and
the comparison of his own experience
with that of the past, he must deduce
general truths. Experiment, thorough
and wisely-conducted, must lead to
the formation of conclusions, which
shall sustain to medical practice the
relation of immutable principles.
Let, then, every aspirant to an honorable
station in the medical profession, bring-
ing to his labor a well-disciplined mind
commence with an ardent zeal the
task of "collecting and arranging impor-
tant facts." Let him not suppose, that
every opinion, hitherto advanced,
is correct and embrace without further

investigation; but let him exercise that
noblest gift of God to man, his reason.

And as he leaves the consecrated halls
of learning and goes forth to contend with

"All maladies,

Of ghastly spasm or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony; all febrile kinds;
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs;
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
Demonic phrensy, moping melancholy
And moon-struck madness; pining atrophy
Marasmus and wide-wasting pestilence;

Dropsies and asthmas and joint-racking rheum,"
let him study well and faithfully the
varied phases of disease and by the
application of reason to practice, ele-
vate himself above the mere routine
of an automaton practitioner. Let all

unite cheerfully, eagerly and harmoniously in this noble labor, compare and correct previously-formed opinions, if erroneous and draw from their combined treasures of experience their principles of action.

Let this be done and then shall the physician be a true worshiper at the shrine of Apollo. Then shall smoking incense arise from his altar "for the healing of the nations." Then shall Hydra-headed Error in all its protean forms be destroyed before the onward progress of true Knowledge, every form of Empiricism vanish in the noon-tide light of reason judgment and correct observation and Medicine be cordially welcomed, as a kind angel of mercy on a mission of love to suffering humanity.